

food stamps in utah

The purpose of the Food Stamp Program is to end hunger and improve nutrition and health. It helps low-income households buy the food they need for a nutritionally adequate diet.

The Food Stamp Program is the nation's most important program in the fight against hunger because of the basic protection it provides persons of all ages and household status. Food stamps are designed to improve the nutrition of people with low incomes by providing benefits to cover part of their household's food budget. The Department of Workforce Services (DWS) administers the Food Stamp Program in Utah. The federal government pays the full cost of food stamp benefits and half of the program's administrative costs.

Food stamps are critical for both working and non-working families. Households are issued a monthly allotment based on the size and income level of the household. The maximum allotment is based on the "Thrifty Food Plan" designed by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). To be eligible for food stamps, a household must meet

certain eligibility standards. A few of them are mentioned below:

•**Income and Resources:**

Households must meet income and resource standards.

•**Work Requirements:**

With some exceptions, able-bodied adults between 16 and 60 must register for work, take part in an employment and training program to which they are referred and accept or continue suitable employment. In addition, able-bodied adults between 18 and 50 who do not have any dependent children can get food stamps only for 3 months

in a 36-month period if they do not work or participate in a workfare or employment and training program other than job search. Other members of the household may continue to get food stamps even if this person is disqualified. This requirement is waived in some locations.



•Citizenship:

Citizens and certain non-citizens may be eligible. Eligible non-citizens include refugees, asylees and deportees for a period of 7 years after they enter the country or their status is granted, certain battered individuals, and individuals admitted for lawful permanent residence who have a military connection or who can be credited with 40 quarters of work (about 10 years).

Refugees, asylees, deportees, battered aliens, and lawful permanent residents may also be eligible if they were lawfully living in the U.S. on August 22, 1996, and were over 65 on that date,

or are now under 18, or are receiving disability or blindness payments. In addition, certain Hmong and other Highland Laotians and their spouses and children and foreign-born members of American Indian tribes entitled to cross into Canada and Mexico may also be eligible. The status of non-citizens must be verified.

The amount of benefits an eligible household receives depends on the number of people in the household and the amount of income the household has. For example, a household of three people with no income can receive up to \$329 a month in

benefits. Households with income are expected to use about 30 percent of their own money for food. The average monthly amount of benefits in 2000 was about \$70 a person and \$174 per household. In Utah, benefits are issued to households via electronic benefits transfer onto the Utah Horizon Card that is used like a debit card in approved stores.

Access

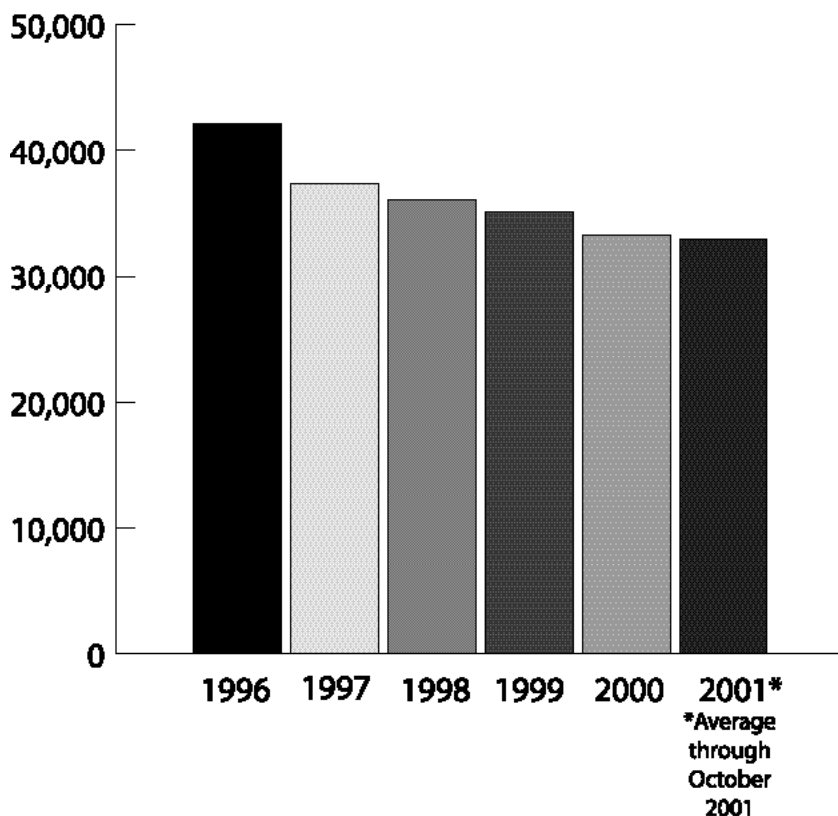
Recently, data have demonstrated a decline in food stamp caseloads nationally and in Utah.

It is not yet clear what all of the forces at work here are, nor which are most influential. As a result, DWS, in cooperation with community advocates, created an outreach piece to inform the public about the availability of food stamps.

General information on the Food Stamp Program, eligibility information and worksheets, checklists and answers to common questions will all be included in this package. DWS also plans to implement a toll free number the public can call to obtain more information on food stamps.

DWS also changed vehicle asset policies in 2001 to allow more households to participate in the Food Stamp Program. The asset policy changed to exclude \$8,000 from the value of one vehicle in the household. Another change excludes the value of a vehicle that cannot be sold for a significant return which is defined as \$1,500.

Average Monthly Food Stamp Cases 1996-2001



Nutrition

Another goal of the Food Stamp Program is to provide educational programs that help food stamp recipients make healthy food choices within a limited budget.

Nutrition Education Programs are provided through Utah State University Extension offices throughout the state and offer services such as accurate nutritional information, food budget-

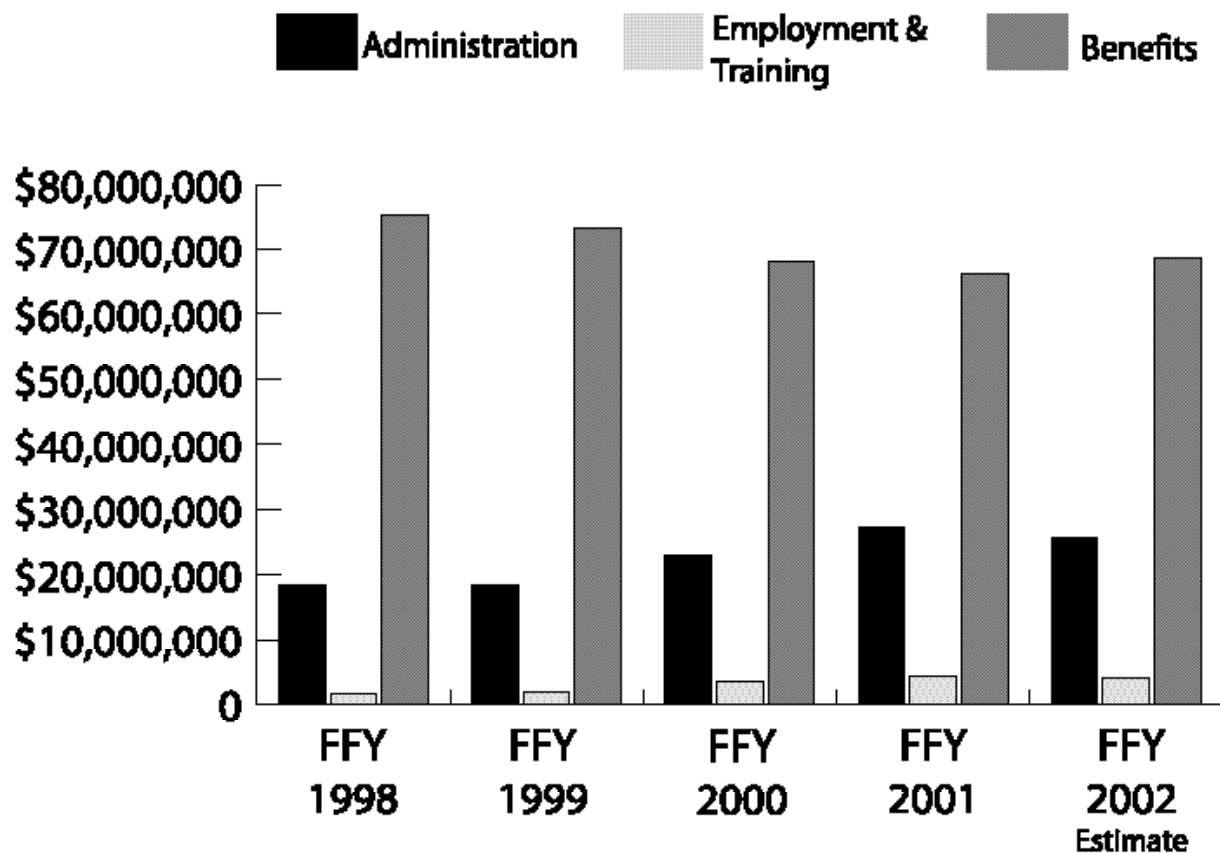
ing, food preparation skills, providing adequate diets to infants and children, and gardening and food preservation.

In 2001, plans were made to expand the education and outreach components of the Food Stamp Program to ensure more Utahns receive information on the importance of nutritionally adequate diets.

As with many other human service programs, success in the Food

Stamp Program relies heavily on a strong state-federal partnership. Although food stamp benefits are 100 percent federally funded, states administer the program. Further, the administrative funding is shared fifty-fifty. Complex program rules and quality control processes place a heavy demand on administrative funding which has increased steadily over the last five years.

Food Stamp Expenditures





For additional information on these or other programs go to:

jobs.utah.gov



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